

less, I am forced to support this resolution because of the circumstances.

PASS THE CONTINUING RESOLUTION NOW

Mr. WELLSTONE. Mr. President, I rise in support of House Joint Resolution 108, the continuing resolution. I am pleased that Congress and the President, after long negotiations, were able to work out this agreement that would provide interim levels of funding for programs and activities of the Federal Government until November 13, 1995.

I understand the President will sign this bill. Its expected enactment over the weekend will avert a massive shutdown of the Federal Government, and all of the many costly problems that would cause for people in my State and throughout the Nation who depend on the Federal Government for Social Security, Medicare, student loans, farm payments, and other benefits and services—and for Federal workers who might otherwise have been furloughed for an extended period starting as early as next week. I expect that the administration will exercise its spending authority to avoid furloughs that is provided for in this bill.

I am also pleased that at my urging, working with White House Chief of Staff Leon Panetta, the Appropriations Committee removed the outrageously unfair and arbitrary provision in the bill which would have prohibited any Low-Income Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) funding to be distributed to the States.

Several days ago, I alerted Appropriations Committee Chairman HATFIELD to my concerns about this matter in a letter, a copy of which I ask be printed in the RECORD following my statement.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

(See exhibit 1.)

Mr. WELLSTONE. Mr. President, in the letter, I observed that LIHEAP is a highly targeted, cost-effective way to help 5.6 million very low-income American families—or roughly 15 million individuals—to pay their energy bills. More than two-thirds of LIHEAP households have annual incomes less than \$8000; more than one-half have incomes below \$6000. Further, the average LIHEAP recipients spend 18.4 percent of their income on energy, compared with 6.7 percent for all households.

I pointed out that Minnesota is the third coldest State, in terms of heating degree days, in the country, after Alaska and North Dakota. Especially in cold-weather states like Minnesota and Oregon, funding for LIHEAP is critical to families with children and vulnerable low-income elderly persons, who without it could be forced to choose between food and heat.

The LIHEAP program assists approximately 110,000 households in Minnesota, and provides an average energy

assistance benefit of about \$360 per heating season. In Minnesota, where the first snows have fallen in some parts of the State, that heating season is already underway, and many people are relying on this funding. While I believe that more should have been released, considering the unique nature of LIHEAP which historically releases the bulk of its funds to cold-weather States immediately in October, I am pleased that at least some of these funds—about \$140 million—will be made available immediately on Monday to help pay fuel bills, fix or replace furnaces on an emergency basis, and help with weatherization against the coming winter.

While final funding levels for LIHEAP for this winter and next will likely have to be settled on the Senate floor, and in a conference committee, interim funding for the first part of this winter will be made available on October 1 to avoid large numbers of utility shut-offs and other heating emergencies that could have resulted in serious heating-related tragedies, including the deaths of people in cold-weather areas whose furnaces fail and who are unable to get them repaired or replaced, or other serious problems for those who are unable to pay for the heating season's first fill of fuel without LIHEAP assistance, or who are otherwise placed at risk by this provision.

Mr. President, this is a compromise bill. It does not provide for adequate funding levels for all Federal programs. But in general it applies its spending formulas in a way that is fair and responsible, and I urge its prompt enactment.

EXHIBIT 1

September 26, 1995.

Hon. MARK HATFIELD,
Chairman, Committee on Appropriations, U.S.
Senate, Washington, DC.

DEAR MR. CHAIRMAN: I write to urge you to drop from the continuing resolution that is being prepared for likely Senate floor consideration later this week the provision that would prohibit all federal Low-Income Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) funds from being released until enactment of the FY 1996 Labor-HHS Appropriations bill, which could be delayed until late November.

In my view, it is outrageous that recipients of energy assistance are being singled out, among those who are helped by all programs of the federal government, for this special funding restriction. I hope you will agree that isolating for especially harsh treatment families with children and vulnerable low-income elderly persons, who without LIHEAP assistance early this winter could be forced to choose between food and heat, is deeply unfair, arbitrary, and even mean-spirited, and should be opposed. It is especially troubling that such an important decision could be made without a single hearing, or even a public indication of the Committee's intentions.

As you know, the huge reductions in this winter's LIHEAP funding (approximately 25 percent) contained in the recently-enacted rescissions bill was one of the main reasons I insisted on an opportunity to try to amend the bill to restore LIHEAP funding on the floor. Though that effort was unsuccessful, I believe it showed the substantial support

which exists within the Senate for the program, and for its goal of providing critical energy assistance to qualified recipients.

While final LIHEAP funding levels will likely have to be debated on the Senate and House floors, and again in conference, interim funding for early this winter must be made available on October 1 to avoid large numbers of utility shut-offs and other heating emergencies that could result in serious tragedies. These could include the deaths of people in cold-weather areas whose furnaces fail and who are unable to get them repaired or replaced, or other serious problems for those who are unable to pay for the heating season's first fill of fuel without LIHEAP assistance, or who are otherwise placed at risk by this provision.

LIHEAP is a highly targeted, cost-effective way to help 5.6 million very low-income American families—or roughly 15 million individuals—to pay their energy bills. As the Committee's report on the rescissions bill observed, more than two-thirds of LIHEAP households have annual incomes less than \$8000; more than one-half have incomes below \$6000. Further, the average LIHEAP recipients spend 18.4 percent of their income on energy, compared with 6.7 percent for all households.

Minnesota is the third coldest state, in terms of heating degree days, in the country, after Alaska and North Dakota. Especially in cold-weather states like Minnesota and Oregon, funding for LIHEAP is critical to families with children and vulnerable low-income elderly persons, who without it could be forced to choose between food and heat. The LIHEAP program assists approximately 110,000 households in Minnesota, and provides an average energy assistance benefit of about \$360 per heating season. In Minnesota, where the first snows have fallen in some parts of the state, that heating season is already underway, and many people are expecting this funding to be released, as long scheduled, on October 1.

This proposal to arbitrarily prohibit distribution of all LIHEAP funds to the states on October 1 could wreak havoc in the lives of eligible vulnerable elderly, families with children, and other low-income people in my state and across the nation. I urge you in the strongest terms to reject it.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

PAUL DAVID WELLSTONE,
U.S. Senate.

Mr. DOLE. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the resolution be read three times, passed, and the motion to reconsider be laid upon the table.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

So the joint resolution (H.J. Res. 108) was deemed read the third time and passed.

MIDDLE EAST PEACE FACILITATION ACT

Mr. DOLE. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate now turn to the consideration of H.R. 2404, regarding Middle East peace, just received from the House; that the bill be read a third time and passed; and that the motion to reconsider be laid upon the table.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

So the bill (H.R. 2404) was deemed read the third time and passed.